

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Blessings and Popular Devotions

Catechist Preparation

Clarifying the Essentials

The sacramentals of the Church purify and integrate all of the rich signs and symbols of the universe and of social life.

- Sacramentals, sacred signs and actions authorized by the Church, prepare us to receive the sacraments fruitfully and help to make holy the variety of circumstances found in life (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1677).
- The Church responds to the needs, culture, and special history of the faithful who live in a particular area by instituting sacramentals, which always include prayer and a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands or sprinkling with holy water (see CCC 1668).

Everyone who is baptized is called to be a blessing to others and to bless; therefore, the sacramentals of the Church derive from the priestly status conferred upon us by Baptism.

- Laypersons may preside at certain blessings, although those that pertain more directly to Church life are reserved for the ordained (see CCC 1669).
- Blessings and sacramentals derive their effectiveness and power from the Paschal Mystery of Christ (see CCC 1670).

Why Is This Important?

Every important event or situation in life finds an expression of faith in the sacramentals. All events can be a potent occasion to raise mind and heart to God in prayer, praising the Lord for his goodness, or asking him for healing and comfort. *All* of life is a gift from God. The sacramentals acknowledge this most basic notion of faith.

[Jesus] gave thanks in order to teach us always to give thanks for the favors we have received from heaven . . .

SAINT BEDE THE VENERABLE

Doctrinal Session Guide

(Approximately 60 minutes)

Arrange the space with chairs, and provide a focal point with a candle, a Bible, a crucifix, a rosary, holy water, a medal, and a variety of other sacramentals. Provide name tags and have some refreshments available. If possible, have rosaries available for all participants.

Welcome

Greet the participants as they arrive, and take time for introductions. Provide copies of Daniel 3:57-88 and ask each person to pray aloud a verse.

Engage

1. Pass around several objects that are sacramentals for each person to see and touch.
2. Ask the group to silently read the material in *Insight* and then explore the *For Reflection* questions together.

Teach

Summarize or invite the group to read *Church Teaching*. Then discuss the following:

- Sacramentals are not ends in themselves but are meant to lead us to celebrate the sacraments, and they remind us that Christ is part of all life.
- Sacramentals include more than just objects. Blessing prayers, litanies, and novenas are also sacramentals.
- Devotions are meant to foster a deeper prayer life. They are a source of comfort in difficult times and give voice to our joy in good times.

Apply

Encourage the participants to silently complete these statements. Invite volunteers to share their responses with the whole group:

From the prayer, discussion, and study for this topic, I understand the Church's teaching to be . . .
I am challenged to live the message of this teaching by . . .

Pray

Pray a decade of the Rosary together, and conclude by singing or playing a recording of a suggested song for this session.